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SUBJECT: NOVEMBER 21 HLTF: ALLIES AGREE TO CFE LANGUAGE FOR COMMUNIQUE; AWAIT REACTIVATION OF CFE BILAT CHANNEL

REF: STATE 122520 (NOV 21 HLTF GUIDANCE)

Classified By: A/DCM W. Scott Reid for reasons 1.4 (B) & (D).

¶11. (C) SUMMARY. At the November 21 NATO High Level Task Force (HLTF) meeting, Allies agreed on CFE language for the upcoming NATO Ministerial communique and how to deploy agreed language at subsequent key dates in December. The text (agreed via silence procedure on November 24) is closely based on Bucharest Summit language, updated to address Russia's actions in Georgia and Allies' growing concern about Russia's continued suspension of CFE implementation. It stresses Allies' commitment to CFE and openness to working with Russia via the Parallel Actions Package to preserve its benefits. The text will also serve as a basis for a NATO statement on CFE at the OSCE Ministerial in Helsinki, and to address the December 15 data exchange in Vienna. Most Allies did not express support for issuing an Allied public statement on December 12, the anniversary of Russia's "suspension".

¶12. (C) Discussions at the HLTF and on the margins touched on the status of the Fried-Antonov CFE bilateral channel with respect to Georgia, the unlikely utility of NATO-Russia Council Arms Control Experts' meetings in 2009, and Allied thinking on the Medvedev European Security Treaty proposal. As at the last HLTF meeting, the French rep found himself defending President Sarkozy's public call for an OSCE Summit as soon as mid-2009, which he said was apparently due to the media misreading Sarkozy's attempt to focus on the idea that an OSCE Summit could not occur before the NATO Summit in April 2009. END SUMMARY.

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CONTACTS and BILATERALS
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¶13. (C) As expected, reporting on contacts and bilaterals with Russian interlocutors was minimal but provided some insights:

-- United Kingdom: As evidence of Russia's continued diplomatic push on Medvedev's still vague European Security proposal, UK Rep Ford reported in the HLTF plenary that Nick Pickard, Head of the FCO Security Policy Group, had met with Yuri Gorlach, MFA Deputy Director for European Cooperation, on November 7 to discuss Russia's proposal. Ford noted Russia offered nothing new but was keen to gain support from the UK and other European capitals. He remarked that Gorlach had stressed Russia was interested in keeping CFE - assuming

it was "modernized" with not only additional limitations on forces (for NATO), but also on basing and infrastructure. The UK emphasized that existing institutions and principles, to include human rights, must remain the basic framework for any discussions and that new ideas were welcome as long as they were credible (which would entail compliance with existing commitments.)

-- Germany: During the Quad meeting the day prior to the HLTF, German Rep Biontino provided Russian "feedback" on CFE based on a bilateral meeting with MFA Counselor Sergey Federyakov of the Department for Security and Disarmament Affairs. Federyakov noted that the Parallel Actions Plan is still relevant; Russia has proposals based on the March 28 NAC statement but will only present them when talks resume; Russia will not distribute its CFE data on December 15 but will provide aggregate information; and MAP for Georgia and Ukraine is a CFE red line for Russia. Biontino noted this last point was in keeping with the position MFA Director Antonov laid out at the CFE Review Conference in 2006 - MAP for Georgia and Ukraine would give further emphasis to those in Russia arguing against CFE. Biontino did not repeat this report during the HLTF plenary.

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THE WAY AHEAD
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¶4. (C) The HLTF Chair (IS/Robert Simmons) used the way ahead discussion to seek HLTF input on the impact of arms control to feed into upcoming NATO discussions of the Medvedev

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European Security Treaty proposal and the drafting of a limited list of potential NATO-Russia Council meetings in 2009 in the context of "no business as usual" in NATO-Russia relations:

-- Medvedev Security Treaty: In the HLTF meeting and on the margins most Allies welcomed the news that NATO permreps would be discussing what NATO's position should be on Russia's European Security Treaty proposal. U.S. HLTF Rep State/VCI DAS Karin L. Look emphasized it would be useful for NATO to have a unified voice on general principles for the upcoming OSCE ministerial. Only Romania (Director General for Strategic Affairs Stoica) spoke at length in the HLTF, underscoring that NATO Allies should stress the criticality of the current system and should make clear our skepticism about Russia's intentions, especially since Russia is not meeting its existing OSCE and CFE commitments. That theme was echoed in comments on the margins by Turkey, the Baltics, and the UK, and - to a large degree - France. Only Germany countered - at the Quad meeting - that "negotiating" a unified approach would be challenging considering the broader issues with which the OSCE deals.

-- NRC (ACE): Simmons raised the idea of not having the NRC (ACE) on the list of possible NATO-Russia meetings for 2009, stressing that the focus for now was on the Parallel Actions Package and the bilateral channel. The U.S. (Look) concurred that the bilateral channel was the focus and remarked that the NRC (ACE) format had not been productive in the past and would not be of use in the near term, although that did not mean we would never find it useful to have an ACE meeting. Others who spoke (TU, GER, IT, FR, SP and BE) agreed there was no reason to have an NRC (ACE) meeting anytime soon, but did not want to preclude the possibility of the NRC (ACE) meeting in 2009 at all. The Chair undertook to report that most wanted to keep the NRC (ACE) format on the list, but cautioned that doing so could result in Russia calling for a meeting soon, especially if the list was given to Russia and its purpose was to identify meetings to be held in the near term.

¶5. (C) Georgia and the Parallel Actions Package: Prompted by the Chair to speak to the status of the Fried-Antonov

talks, U.S. Rep Look indicated that the U.S. was exploring options for a way ahead via CFE that addresses the consequences of Russia's military actions in Georgia by building Georgia's security, influencing Russia to implement its commitments, and preserving Allied principles. Look noted Allied concerns for trying to keep positive momentum and remarked that this type of approach - with which the Georgians would have to be comfortable - may enable us to reengage with Russia on CFE through the Fried-Antonov channel soon. On the margins, per guidance from A/S Fried on the 20th, U.S. Rep Look and Jennifer Laurendeau described A/S Fried's efforts regarding Georgia to Quad Allies, the Turkish HOD, the Romanian Deputy, the Lithuanian HOD and Estonian HOD: A/S Fried was discussing ideas with the Georgians; the U.S. hoped to be able to discuss ideas in detail with Allies in the next weeks; and Fried hoped to meet Antonov before the end of the year.

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COMMUNIQUE LANGUAGE AGREED - EVENTUALLY
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¶6. (C) The highlight of the relatively brief HLTF plenary was the eventual ad ref agreement on a CFE paragraph for inclusion in the NAC Foreign Ministerial communique. The text is closely based on Bucharest Summit language (updated) and was originally developed among Quad Allies (behind the scenes) at the November 5-7 HLTF off-site meeting in Romania.

The final text cleared silence on November 24 and is included below in para 10.

-- The Quad along with Turkey, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, the Baltics, Romania, and many others, including Iceland, supported the text as presented. The key stakeholders stressed that the balanced, well-structured text addressed core NATO interests and that Allies should not open it for changes. With its frank criticism of Russia's actions in Georgia and suspension of CFE, the text is also the

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maximum that Germany and France could accept - and the least the U.S. could accept. The text reflects a basic NATO understanding that CFE is a cornerstone of European security; Allies want to preserve its benefits and hope Russia will work with us toward that goal.

-- During the November 21 HLTF discussion, Portugal and Italy sought to edit the document but were essentially overridden by the majority. Italy initially insisted on two "stylistic" changes, but eventually relented by accepting agreement to just one edit (changing the word "engage" to "work" in the final sentence) in an effort to more accurately reflect Bucharest wording.

-- Portugal - claiming the language seemed like an empty threat - requested deletion of the entire sentence that reads, "However, the current situation, where NATO CFE Allies implement the Treaty while Russia does not, cannot last indefinitely." The U.S. (supported by POL, GER, NL, BE, NO, TU and CZ) noted this was not a threat; the U.S. stressed it was an agreed Alliance position reflected in Bucharest and an essential element that must remain in the text or risk misinterpretation. After extensive discussion, the Portuguese Rep backed off bracketing the text but required a period of silence to gain approval in Lisbon.

¶7. (C) Allies agreed that this text should be used as necessary by NATO states at the OSCE Ministerial in Helsinki and would not be renegotiated unless major events intervened.

The text will also serve as a basis for an Allied statement in Vienna at the December 16 JCG. The intention is for Allies to use the communique text with an additional paragraph specific to the December 15 data exchange. As far as any statement on December 12, even for public diplomacy purposes, Allies were not convinced of the need for another statement so close to other events and did not think there

was a need to call unnecessary attention to the anniversary of Russia's "suspension."

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MEETINGS ON THE MARGINS
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¶8. (C) On the margins of the HLTF, the U.S. met with Quad reps from Germany, France and the UK, as well as conducted bilateral meetings with Turkey, the Czech Republic and Estonia. For the most part, Allies previewed and discussed the same points that they made in the main HLTF meeting with a few exceptions.

-- Quad: Most of the discussion in the quad mirrored points made in plenary. However, in addition to Germany's report on contacts and bilats (see para 2), there was some discussion of recent mention in the press of an OSCE Summit as early as mid-2009. As at the October HLTF meeting, the French Rep (Raharinaivo) found himself defending public statements of President Sarkozy, but this time - only at the quad meeting. Raharinaivo made clear that Sarkozy's call at the EU-Russia Summit for an OSCE Summit in 2009 was intended to focus on the idea that an OSCE Summit could not occur before the April NATO Summit and could not occur without consultation with the U.S. This was read by the media as a call for a summit in the first 6 months of 2009. Raharinaivo remarked that a 2009 OSCE Summit could serve to launch the process and not necessarily to reach any decisions; it "could be" in the context of the OSCE (the decision was not up to Sarkozy).

-- Turkey: Turkish Rep Ahmet Gun's basic message to U.S. Rep Look was simple: Turkey wants to save CFE, including its flank regime, appreciates U.S. efforts, and wants no surprises. Like others, he is mistrustful of the European Security Treaty proposal and worried about what will result from the Ministers' luncheon discussion of the idea at the Helsinki Ministerial.

-- Czech Republic: At the October HLTF meeting and the early November off-site, the Czech Republic distributed a food-for-thought paper and pushed for contingency planning so Allies would be prepared for a potential "future without the CFE." U.S. Rep Look met with Czech Rep Zvonkova on the margins of the HLTF to discuss the benefit of an approach

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that does not presuppose the demise of CFE and proactively seeks nearer term solutions, including finding a way to use CFE principles to achieve progress in Georgia and reflect that in the Parallel Actions Package. Look emphasized that Allies should maintain a unified approach that preserves our core principles and serves NATO's interests. Our aim, and focus, should be to preserve the CFE regime with Russia as a fully implementing State Party, especially as it would be impossible to negotiate a CFE replacement from scratch.

-- Estonia: U.S. Rep Look met briefly with Estonian Rep Kolga, primarily to let him know about A/S Fried's consultations with Georgia. Kolga seemed genuinely pleased that the U.S. was working to find a way to use CFE to address Russia's actions in Georgia and to get the Parallel Actions Package - which includes early consultations by the Baltic states - restarted.

¶9. (SBU) NEXT MEETINGS. Regarding the HLTF schedule for the remainder of the year, Allies agreed a meeting in December was probably not necessary but kept the December 11 date tentatively available. The HLTF will most likely reconvene during the week of January 26, 2009.

¶10. (SBU) HLTF AGREED CFE TEXT FOR INCLUSION IN THE COMMUNIQUE OF THE MINISTERIAL MEETING IN DECEMBER 2008

BEGIN TEXT:

We place the highest value on the CFE Treaty regime with all its elements. We underscore the strategic importance of the CFE Treaty, including its flank regime, as a cornerstone of Euro-Atlantic Security. We reiterate the endorsement by Heads of State and Government at the Bucharest Summit of the statement of the North Atlantic Council of 28 March 2008. We reaffirm the Alliance's commitment to the CFE Treaty Regime, as expressed in the Alliance's position contained in paragraph 42 of the 2006 Riga Summit Declaration, the final statement by Allies at the CFE Extraordinary Conference in Vienna and Alliance statements reflecting subsequent developments. We are deeply concerned that, for nearly a full year, since 12 December 2007, the Russian Federation has continued its unilateral "suspension" of its legal obligations under the CFE Treaty. Furthermore, Russia's actions in Georgia have called into question its commitment to the fundamental OSCE principles on which stability and security in Europe are based: principles which underpin the CFE Treaty. These actions run counter to our common objective of preserving the long-term viability of the CFE regime and we call upon the Russian Federation to resume its implementation without further delay. Because of our commitment to cooperative security and fulfillment of international agreements as well as the importance we attach to the confidence that results from military transparency and predictability, we have continued fully to implement the Treaty despite Russia's "suspension". However, the current situation, where NATO CFE Allies implement the Treaty while Russia does not, cannot last indefinitely. Over a year ago, we offered a set of constructive and forward-looking proposals for parallel actions on key issues, including steps by NATO Allies on ratification of the Adapted CFE Treaty and by the Russian Federation on outstanding commitments related to Georgia and the Republic of Moldova. We continue to believe that these proposals address all of Russia's stated concerns. We urge the Russian Federation to work cooperatively with us and other concerned CFE States Parties to reach agreement on the basis of the parallel actions package so that together we can preserve the benefits of this landmark regime.

VOLKER